

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 097553 TOSEC 040072
ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:GSHerman:LHW
APPROVED BY P:DDNEWSOM
NEA:HHSAUNDERS
S/S-O: RCASTRODALE
NEA:ALATHERTON,JR.

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O 152301Z APR 78 ZFF6
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 097553 TOSEC 040072

NODIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:SOPN, OVIP, IS, EG

SUBJECT: PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT OF ATHERTON TRIP

1. FOLLOWING IS PROPOSED PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRESS GUIDANCE ON ATHERTON TRIP WHICH WE PROPOSE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN WILL USE AT NOON BRIEFING MONDAY APRIL 17. PLEASE CONVEY TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT ONLY TO GOVERNMENTS, SO THAT WE CAN HAVE ANY THOUGHTS THEY MAY HAVE BY OPENING OF BUSINESS MONDAY. FOR TEL AVIV: PLEASE TELL ISRAELIS THAT WE RECOGNIZE THAT STOP IN JERUSALEM MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE IF DAYAN AND SECRETARY ARE ABLE TO MEET IN WASHINGTON IN LAST WEEK OF APRIL AND ATHERTON RETURNS TO BE PRESENT, BUT WE THINK IT DESIRABLE NEVERTHELESS TO INCLUDE ISRAEL ON THE SECRET

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ANNOUNCED ITINERARY. SHOULD SECRETARY-DAYAN MEETING OCCUR, WE CAN EASILY EXPLAIN CHANGE IN ATHERTON ITINERARY AT THE TIME.

2. BEGIN TEXT OF PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT ON TRIP.

--AS PART OF OUR CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PARTIES, THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS ASKED AMBASSADOR ATHERTON TO GO

TO EGYPT AND ISRAEL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE NEXT MOVES IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. HIS VISIT IS

PART OF THE DETERMINED EFFORTS IN WHICH WE AND THE TWO PARTIES ARE ENGAGED TO MOVE THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS FORWARD. AMBASSADOR ATHERTON WILL GO FIRST TO CAIRO, ARRIVING THE END OF THIS WEEK, AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER TO ISRAEL. HIS PRESENT PLAN IS TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON THE LAST WEEK OF APRIL AFTER THIS ROUND OF TALKS IN BOTH COUNTRIES. END TEXT.

3. BEGIN PRESS GUIDANCE FOR FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Q. WHY CAN YOU NOT GIVE US THE EXACT TIMES NOW? WHEN WILL ATHERTON ARRIVE IN CAIRO? IS HE GOING ELSEWHERE BESIDE EGYPT AND ISRAEL?

A. -- THE EXACT ITINERARY IS STILL BEING WORKED OUT. I CAN SAY THAT AMBASSADOR ATHERTON PLANS TO ARRIVE IN CAIRO FRIDAY, APRIL 21, AFTER A BRIEF STOPOVER IN LONDON. PRESENT PLANS CALL FOR HIM TO GO ON TO ISRAEL ABOUT APRIL 25, ALTHOUGH THAT TIMING COULD CHANGE SOMEWHAT AS

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THE CONSULTATIONS GO FORWARD.

-- THE AMBASSADOR HAS NO PRESENT PLANS TO GO ELSEWHERE BEYOND EGYPT AND ISRAEL.

-- THE IMPORTANT THING TO NOTE IS THAT THIS IS NOT A SHUTTLE TRIP. AMBASSADOR ATHERTON IS HAVING A ROUND OF TALKS IN EACH COUNTRY, AS PART OF THE CONTINUING CONSULTATIONS ON HOW TO PROCEED NEXT, AND THEN HE WILL RETURN TO WASHINGTON TO REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.

Q. WHY IS HE STOPPING IN LONDON? WILL HE MEET SECRETARY VANCE THERE?

A.-- SINCE NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY HAROLD SAUNDERS WILL BE IN LONDON FOR THE CENTO MEETING, AND BECAUSE WE HAVE FREQUENT EXCHANGES ROUTINELY WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS, AMBASSADOR ATHERTON DECIDED TO STOP BRIEFLY IN LONDON SO THAT HE AND SAUNDERS CAN CONSULT AND ALSO TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO BRITISH OFFICIALS ABOUT OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TOWARD MIDDLE EAST PEACE.

-- SECRETARY VANCE WILL HAVE DEPARTED FROM LONDON BY THE TIME ATHERTON ARRIVES.

Q. WHY IS ATHERTON GOING FIRST TO CAIRO? DO NOT AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS USUALLY START IN ISRAEL?

A.-- AS YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISERS HAD DETAILLED DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN SEVERAL WEEKS AGO DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT HERE. IN THOSE DISCUSSIONS EACH SIDE WAS ABLE TO GO THOROUGHLY INTO ITS IDEAS ON THE KEY ISSUES.

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-- FROM THE REPORT ATHERTON BRINGS BACK, THE SECRETARY EXPECTS TO GET FURTHER REFINEMENT IN PLANS FOR HOW TO PROCEED NEXT IN THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS.

Q. BUT WHY NOW? IS ATHERTON TAKING SOME AMERICAN PROPOSALS?

A.-- THIS IS A CONTINUING PROCESS. EACH ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS CUTS ONE LAYER DEEPER INTO THE DETAILS OF THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS THAT ARE BEING NEGOTIATED. WE WANT TO KEEP THE PROCESS MOVING. WE HAVE NOT HAD COMPREHENSIVE TALKS SINCE ATHERTON WAS IN CAIRO MARCH 5-7, AND PRIME MINISTER BEGIN WAS IN WASHINGTON MARCH 21-22.

-- AT A TIME WHEN BOTH PARTIES AND WE ARE ENGAGED IN AN INTENSIVE SEARCH FOR WAYS TO MOVE THE NEGOTIATIONS FORWARD, THE SECRETARY THOUGHT THIS NEW ROUND OF TALKS WOULD BE IMPORTANT AND THE PARTIES AGREED.

-- THE AMBASSADOR IS NOT TAKING ANY AMERICAN PROPOSALS. HE WILL BE LISTENING TO WHAT BOTH HAVE TO SAY ON THE PEACE PROCESS, AND IN TURN WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH THEM OUR OWN APPROACH TO THE ISSUES IN AN EFFORT TO MOVE THE PROCESS FORWARD.

Q. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THAT APPROACH?

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A.--SECRETARY VANCE SPELLED IT OUT IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON MARCH 24, AND AMBASSADOR ATHERTON ENLARGED ON IT IN HIS SPEECH IN ATLANTA OF APRIL 5. THAT APPROACH HAS NOT CHANGED.

-- TRANSCRIPTS OF BOTH REMARKS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE PRESS

OFFICE. BEYOND THEM, I HAVE NOTHING FOR YOU.

Q. BUT IS THE ATHERTON MISSION PRELIMINARY TO THE UNITED STATES PUTTING FORWARD A FORMAL PROPOSAL TO BREAK THE NEGOTIATING DEADLOCK?

A.-- AS I HAVE SAID, THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT IS TO CONTINUE CONSULTATIONS ON MOVING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS FORWARD. WE HAVE SAID REPEATEDLY THAT AT SOME POINT WE MAY PUT FORWARD SUGGESTIONS OF OUR OWN, BUT NO DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON THAT YET.

Q. HAS AMBASSADOR ATHERTON'S VISIT BEEN PROMPTED BY ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN'S APPARENT SOFTENING OF THE ISRAELI POSITION ON APPLYING RESOLUTION 242 TO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIS REMARKS (IN THE WASHINGTON POST REPORT, APRIL 15)?

A.--AMBASSADOR ATHERTON'S TRIP HAS NOT BEEN PROMPTED BY ANY SINGLE EVENT. LAST WEEK, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR AFRICA, THE SECRETARY DECIDED IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR AMBASSADOR ATHERTON TO CONTINUE OUR CONSULTATIONS ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES THROUGH A VISIT TO THOSE COUNTRIES, AND WE THEN PROPOSED A VISIT TO THE PARTIES WHO AGREED.

-- I HAVE NO DETAILED COMMENT ON DAYAN'S INTERVIEW, WHOSE FULL TEXT WE ARE STUDYING. IN GENERAL, WE WANT TO EXPLORE WITH BOTH PARTIES ANY PROPOSALS FOR GETTING AROUND PRESENT DIFFICULTIES.

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Q. WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE ISSUES ATHERTON WILL BE DISCUSSING?

A.-- A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS EXIST, AS YOU ARE AWARE, AND WE WANT TO REVIEW THEM ALL AT THIS STAGE. BEYOND THAT, I CANNOT GET INTO SPECIFICS.

Q. IS NOT THE UNITED STATES INVITING ITSELF BACK INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS BY THIS VISIT, SINCE ISRAEL HAS BEEN NEGATIVE ABOUT THE PREVIOUS ATHERTON MISSION AND DIRECT TALKS ARE NOW UNDERWAY BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL?

A.--THE ATHERTON VISIT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, WHICH WE SUPPORT WHENEVER AND WHEREVER THEY ARE POSSIBLE. AT THE SAME TIME, BOTH PARTIES CONTINUE TO SEE OUR ROLE AS ESSENTIAL FOR MAINTAINING CONTINUITY IN THE PEACE TALKS.

-- OUR EFFORTS, LIKE THEIRS, ARE DIRECTED TOWARD OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY PRESENTLY OF RESUMING

THE WORK OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES.

Q. WHEN IS WEIZMAN RETURNING TO CAIRO? WILL ATHERTON BE THERE AT THE SAME TIME?

A.--QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TIMING OF MINISTER WEIZMAN'S NEXT VISIT TO CAIRO ARE FOR THE TWO GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED TO ANSWER. --

-- I CAN SAY ATHERTON'S TRIP WAS NOT PLANNED TO COINCIDE WITH SUCH A VISIT, AND WE DO NOT EXPECT THE AMBASSADOR TO BE IN CAIRO WHEN WEIZMAN IS THERE.

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Q. IS ATHERTON GOING BECAUSE YOU HAVE HAD SOME INDICATION THAT ISRAEL AND EGYPT ON THEIR OWN ARE NEAR A BREAK-THROUGH ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES?

A.--AMBASSADOR ATHERTON IS GOING TO CONTINUE CONSULTATION ON A WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES INVOLVED IN MOVING THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS FORWARD. THAT, OF COURSE, INCLUDES DISCUSSING DIFFERENCES OVER THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AS WELL AS OTHER PROBLEMS.

-- THE PURPOSE OF THIS ROUND OF TALKS, HOWEVER, IS NOT A DRAMATIC BREAK-THROUGH ON ANY ONE SET OF PROBLEMS. IT IS TO EXPLORE WAYS AROUND CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN RESUMING THE WORK OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES.

Q. IS NOT THIS TRIP JUST A SHAM TO COVER THE PLAIN FACT THAT A NEGOTIATING DEADLOCK EXISTS AND THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW TO BREAK IT?

A.--DIFFICULTIES IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS OBVIOUSLY EXIST, BUT THERE ALSO CONTINUE TO BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS. WE BELIEVE WAYS CAN BE FOUND TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES. AS YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT PUT FORWARD SOME EXPLORATORY IDEAS DURING HIS TALKS HERE WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN.

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-- AS ATHERTON SAID IN HIS ATLANTA SPEECH--DESPITE THE APPARENT DEADLOCK AND REMAINING DIFFERENCES, WE STILL BELIEVE THE DYNAMICS OF THE PROCESS ARE AT WORK TOWARD A NEGOTIATED PEACE. FOR THE FIRST TIME, KEY PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT ARE GENUINELY TRYING TO COME TO TERMS.

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CHRISTOPHER

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FOL STATE 097553 TOSEC 040072 SENT ACTION CAIRO TEL AVIV
USDEL SECRETARY APR 15, 1978 REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

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CHRISTOPHER UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

SECRET

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TAGS: OVIP, SOPN, IS, EG, US, XF, (ATHERTON, ALFRED L JR)
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